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## ABSTRACT

A program to reinforce English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) learning through participation in a choral performance group (Los Cumbancheros) is described and evaluated. The program served 218 students in 5 intermediate and junior high schools and 2 elementary schools in the Bronx (New York). Most students were classified as limited English proficient; some English-proficient and special-education students were also served. Instruction was offered in Spanish native language arts (NLA), ESL, and music and music theory. Students participated in choral performances or in a percussion and dance group. Groups performed at a variety of multicultural activities throughout the school year. Staff development and parental involvement activities were also offered. Evaluation of the program found it met its objectives in NLA, ESL, music theory, English and Spanish oral language proficiency gains, and participation in cultural and educational events. It partially met objectives for staff development and parental involvement. Recommendations for program improvement include: exploration of ways to document student achievement more fully; holding the required number of training sessions for teachers; and increased effort to interest parents in attending workshops. Staff information, scheduling information, performance calendar, school newspaper article, and list of instructional materials and songs are appended. (MSE)

ED 362 004



# OREA Report

Reinforcing E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros  
Choral Performance Group  
(Los Cumbancheros)

1991-92

FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

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7/7/92

Reinforcing E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros  
Choral Performance Group  
(Los Cumbancheros)

1991-92  
SUMMARY

This report documents the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment's (OREA's) evaluation of Reinforcing E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros Choral Performance Group (Los Cumbancheros). The project was funded by New York State Bilingual Categorical Funds for the fourth year.

Los Cumbancheros served 218 students from five intermediate and junior high schools and two elementary schools in four community school districts in the Bronx. Most of the students were classified as limited English proficient, although some English proficient students, as well as a few who were certified for special education, were also served. Spanish Native Language Arts (N.L.A.) and English as a Second Language (E.S.L.) instruction was offered in music and music theory. Students participated in choral performances or in a percussion or dance group. Performing groups participated at a variety of multicultural activities throughout the school year. Los Cumbancheros also provided staff development and parental involvement activities.

The project was successful in meeting its objectives for E.S.L. and N.L.A. music theory, English and Spanish oral language proficiency, and cultural/educational events. It partially met its objectives for staff development and parental involvement.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, OREA makes the following recommendations to the project:

- Explore ways to document student achievement more fully.
- Hold the required number of training sessions for teachers.
- Attempt to interest parents in attending workshops, possibly by selecting topics based on a needs assessment.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was prepared by the Bilingual, Multicultural, and Early Childhood Evaluation unit of the Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment.

Additional copies of this report are available from:

Dr. Tomi Deutsch Berney  
Bilingual, Multicultural, and Early Childhood Evaluation  
Office of Research, Evaluation, and Assessment  
New York City Public Schools  
110 Livingston Street, Room 732  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
(718) 935-3790 FAX (718) 935-5490

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Reinforcing E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros Choral Performance Group (Los Cumbancheros) provided music instruction in Spanish and English to Latino elementary and intermediate school students in the Bronx. Los Cumbancheros aimed to teach music theory, improve participants' oral proficiency in both English and Spanish, provide regular staff development for bilingual and E.S.L. teachers, and involve parents while engaging students in an exciting program of public performances. Originally based on a choral performance group, Los Cumbancheros added a percussion component and decorative arts (in one school) in order to provide activities for non-singers. The project was funded by New York State Bilingual Categorical funds for the fourth year.

### PARTICIPATING STUDENTS

Two hundred eighteen students participated in the project. Staff completed data forms for 169 of them. Of these, one hundred forty-seven (87.0 percent) were Spanish-speaking students of limited English proficiency (LEP); 22 were English proficient (EP); and some were certified to receive special education services. Of the seven participating schools, five were intermediate schools and two were elementary schools.

More than 94.4 percent of the participants were born outside the United States. Many were from low-income families. The pre-program academic performance of many students was well below grade level, and some were at risk of dropping out of school.

### STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

The project staff were all bilingual. The project director, who also taught music, had a master's degree in education and extensive experience in both bilingual education and



music instruction. Another music teacher, a pianist, had a master's degree in administration and supervision. Two of the three music consultants were percussionists, and the third was the group's music arranger. One had a bachelor's degree in music, the other was a high school graduate who had attended music school, and the third consultant had a degree in applied science. The paraprofessional, a high school graduate, was a bassist. (See Appendix A for a complete list of project staff and their qualifications.)

### **SCOPE OF THIS REPORT**

Part II of this report describes the activities which the project implemented for students, staff, and parents. Part III indicates how data were gathered for the evaluation. Part IV reports the outcomes to the objectives which the project proposed to meet. Part V reports conclusions and offers recommendations.

## II. IMPLEMENTATION

### ELIGIBILITY

Students were referred by parents or teachers, or they could refer themselves. They were admitted to the project if they scored at or below the 40th percentile on the Language Assessment Battery (LAB) and if they auditioned successfully. Project staff held auditions at the beginning of the school year.

When participants scored above the 40th percentile on the LAB they were separated from the program, although they could remain in the chorus and attend rehearsals and perform voluntarily. Only those students who showed a lack of interest or who had discipline problems were dismissed.

### PROGRAMMING

The project served seven schools--five intermediate and two elementary--from four different community school districts (C.S.D.s) in the Bronx. (See Table 1.) Two of the seven schools, P.S. 62 and I.S. 144, did not supply OREA with data. The programming at P.S. 62 functioned for six months only, and I.S. 144 offered the program once a week for about five months.

TABLE 1  
Participating Sites and Students

<u>School</u>	<u>C.S.D.</u>	<u>Grade Levels</u>	<u>Number of Participants</u>
I.S. 139	7	6-8	25
P.S. 30	7	5	6
I.S. 52	8	6-8	41
P.S. 62	8	5	27
I.S. 115	10	7,8	48
I.S. 113	11	7,8	38
I.S. 144	11	6-8	33

Participants from P.S. 30 joined with those of I.S. 139. Services to participating fifth graders were so well received at P.S. 30 that the school administrator asked to have other grades included on a non-participant basis. In response, the project director volunteered time to provide after-school rehearsals for interested students in the third or fourth grade.

A contact teacher, usually the head of the bilingual department, was chosen at each site to serve as the school's liaison with the project. In some instances, school and project staff cooperated in contacting parents.

Project staff traveled from site to site. (See Appendix B for a daily class schedule.) Each site held weekly practice sessions. Budgetary constraints in the year under review caused the elimination of after-school rehearsals, so that only full-chorus rehearsals immediately before performances could be held.

## HIGH SCHOOL COMPONENT

Some former program participants who had gone on to high school expressed a desire to remain in the program, even if only on an informal basis. In response, Los Cumbancheros created a high school component. Between five and ten high school students met once a week at I.S. 139 for a two-hour rehearsal after school. Unfortunately, these sessions had to be discontinued when a key staff member was seriously injured at mid-year. The high school students continued to take part in those rehearsals and performances that were held on weekends or in the evening.

## STUDENT ACTIVITIES

The project was initially organized around a choral group, but in order to increase student involvement, Los Cumbancheros added ways for non-singers to participate. The project formed a percussion group, two of the participating schools formed an art group that decorated performance sites, and a third participating school formed a dance group. Every student in all the groups contributed to the performances in some way.

At the beginning of the year, every member of the choral/percussion group signed a "contract" which explained that commitment and dedication to the program were essential. Signing the contract gave students the feeling of making a professional decision and established a bond with the group.

A percussion group of 15 students supplemented the chorus. Tito Puente, the renowned musician, was so impressed with a performance by the percussion group that he arranged for Los Cumbancheros to perform on WPIX, a New York City radio station. Los

Cumbancheros also performed with the Bronx Boroughwide Orchestra and the Bronx Boroughwide Band. (For a list of performances, see Appendix C.)

During rehearsals for a Carnegie Hall performance, Los Cumbancheros made such a good impression that the organizers revised the program to place the students in a more prominent position. (The group was so excited about this performance that when five of them missed the project's bus to Carnegie Hall, they found their own way there from the Bronx.)

Los Cumbancheros also performed for an organization of Hispanic N.Y. State Supreme Court justices in Manhattan. After the performance, the justices greeted the children individually and provided them with lunch.

A former project student published an article about the program in the Alfred E. Smith High School newspaper. The article provided a brief history of the project and expressed the author's appreciation of the project staff. (For a copy of the article, see Appendix D.)

The director reported that former project students remained in contact with one another through an informal network. The shared experience of the program eased their transition to high school.

### TEACHING TECHNIQUES

The program focused on teaching music theory but also provided some art, voice, and music lessons. For the most part, student participation in class determined grades.

E.S.L. and Spanish N.L.A. instruction was supplemented by reviewing the lyrics of songs and analyzing vocabulary and sentence structure. English-dominant and Spanish-

dominant students learned from one another. Through the careful selection and review of all the music used, the project also provided cultural enrichment. (See Appendix E for a sample of songs used and a list of instructional materials.)

### STAFFING

Project staff gave music and voice instruction on both an individual and a group basis. Staff also began development of a bilingual manual on basic music theory.

Staff concerns extended to many aspects of students' welfare. For instance, the project director always advised the local police precincts of evening performances so that the police could watch out for the students as they returned home. In another instance, staff investigated a student's sluggishness and inability to concentrate and found that difficulties at home had impaired the child's diet. Staff provided nutritional counseling, and the student's performance returned to normal. Student health became a concern of the project from then on.

### PARENT CHARACTERISTICS AND INVOLVEMENT

Most of the parents came from Puerto Rico, Honduras, Santo Domingo, or Mexico. Some were from El Salvador, Ecuador, or Peru. Only 25 percent of the parents could speak English.

At the beginning of the year, parents signed an acknowledgment that they had been informed of the aims of the program and that they gave permission for their child to attend project activities. A letter then confirmed their child's selection for participation. Every month thereafter, staff sent parents an update on project events.

A small group of parents attended local performances regularly. For the performance at Carnegie Hall, however, the project filled four buses with students' families.

A parent who was enrolled at Hostos Community College arranged for Los Cumbancheros to perform there. Another parent accepted the project director's invitation to work with project staff to reverse the deterioration in her son's behavior. The mother was so impressed by the work of the staff that she participated in all subsequent parental activities.

### III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

#### DATA COLLECTION

An OREA consultant interviewed the project director to gather qualitative data. School and project staff completed students data forms supplying information about participants' backgrounds and grades in music. The project director furnished agendas and attendance sheets for all staff development activities.

OREA used course grades to evaluate E.S.L. and N.L.A. music theory and a project-developed checklist to assess English and Spanish oral language proficiency. OREA evaluated objectives for staff development, parental involvement, and cultural education activities through project records.



#### IV. OUTCOMES

##### E.S.L. MUSIC THEORY

- By June 1992, 80 percent of LEP students participating in the fourth project year will demonstrate understanding of basic music theory and concepts in English as their second language as measured by the passing criterion on a pre/post teacher developed instrument in basic music theory instruction.

Evaluation instrument: final course grades.

Of the 234 students for whom data were available, 208 (88.9 percent) received passing grades.

**Project met objective for E.S.L. music theory.**

##### N.L.A. MUSIC THEORY

- By June 1992, 80 percent of LEP students participating in the fourth project year will demonstrate an understanding of basic music theory and concepts in the native Spanish language by a passing criterion on a pre/post teacher developed instrument in basic music theory instruction.

Evaluation instrument: final course grades.

Of the 234 students for whom data were available, 211 (90.2 percent) received passing grades.

**Project met objective for N.L.A. music theory.**

## **ENGLISH/SPANISH ORAL LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY**

- Project staff and contact teachers at participating project sites will rate LEP students' oral language proficiency in English/Spanish in individual and group performances using a pre/post rating scale of satisfactory, needs improvement, and unsatisfactory.

Evaluation instrument: project-developed checklist.

Of the 174 students for whom data were available on oral proficiency in English, 135 (77.6 percent) were rated as satisfactory and 39 (22.4 percent) as needing improvement. Of the 174 students for whom data were available on oral proficiency in Spanish, 152 (87.4 percent) were rated as satisfactory and 22 (12.6 percent) as needing improvement. No students were rated unsatisfactory in either Spanish or English oral proficiency.

**Project met objective for English/Spanish oral language proficiency.**

## **STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

- By June 1992 a minimum of four bilingual/E.S.L. teachers will have received a minimum of eight training sessions in methods to teach E.S.L. through music as demonstrated in student choral/percussion teaching sessions by project staff, and methods to manage and organize student choral performances and the learning of E.S.L. activities as measured by attendance sheets and the evaluation survey form developed by the New York City Division of Bilingual Education.

Evaluation indicator: project records.

The project held six training sessions, four of which were attended by four or more teachers. This did not meet the requirement for holding eight training sessions.

**Project partially met the staff development objective.**

## **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

- By June 1992, a minimum of 20 project parents of LEP students representing the project sites will have attended a minimum of four training workshops focusing in providing LEP students with home/instructional support in understanding basic music theory and learning lyrics in Spanish and English as recorded on parent attendance forms and type of training activities checklist.

Evaluation indicator: project records.

The project offered parents ten workshops, considerably more than called for in the objective. Two of the workshops were attended by 20 or more parents, but the other workshops had an attendance of under 20.

**Project partially met the parental involvement objective.**

## **CULTURAL/EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES**

- By June 1992, project participants, 180 LEP students and approximately 20 parents will attend minimum of four cultural/educational activities conducted by project staff and consultants in Spanish and English as their second language as recorded on attendance checklists.

Evaluation indicator: project records.

Almost all students attended ten major performances of Los Cumbancheros.

Parent attendance at these performances varied. At one, more than 80 parents attended; at another, over 30 parents attended. Parental attendance was under 20 for the other eight performances. The objective calls for approximate numbers, nowever, and therefore it can be considered as met.

**Project met objective for parent and student attendance at cultural/educational activities.**

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Reinforcing E.S.L. with Los Cumbancheros Choral Performance Group (Los Cumbancheros) successfully completed its programming for the year under review. Students participated in choral, percussion, and dance performances (in one school) or in an art group (in two schools) that designed settings for performances. Participants and staff alike were enthusiastic about the project. Participants received instruction in E.S.L. and N.L.A. in music and music theory. Students participated in choral performances or in a percussion, dance, or art group and participated at a variety of multicultural activities throughout the year.

Los Cumbancheros was successful in meeting its objectives for E.S.L. and N.L.A. music theory, English and Spanish oral language proficiency, and cultural/educational events. It partially met its objectives for parental involvement and staff development.

Based on the findings of this evaluation, OREA makes the following recommendations:

- Explore ways to document student achievement more fully.
- Hold the required number of training sessions for teachers.
- Attempt to interest parents in attending workshops, possibly by selecting topics based on a needs assessment.

## APPENDIX A: DEGREES AND LANGUAGE PROFICIENCIES OF STAFF

**Raquel Baez:** Project Director, Professional Diploma in Educational Administration and Supervision, M.S. in Education with a Specialization in Reading

**William Rodriguez:** Teacher and Pianist  
M.A. in Administration and Supervision

**Victor Venegas:** Paraprofessional and Bassist, H.S. Diploma

**David Meade:** Music Consultant and Percussionist, B.A. in Music

**George Delgado:** Music Consultant and Percussionist, H.S. Diploma and attended music school

**Francisco Pasto:** Consultant and Arranger, A.A. in Applied Science

**Maria Santiago:** Secretary, Office Associate  
A.A.S. in Early Childhood, Business School, Certificate in Basic Practical Office Skills

# APPENDIX B: DAILY CLASS SCHEDULE

LOS CUMBANCHEROS' CLASS SCHEDULE				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
(Staff meets to plan lessons and Develop materials)	C.S.D. 10 I.S. 115  9:15-10:45	C.S.D. 11 I.S. 113  9:00-10:50	SAME AS TUESDAY	SAME AS WEDNESDAY
LUNCH				
C.S.D. 11 I.S. 144  1:00-2:30  P.S. 62 3:00-5:00	C.S.D. 7 I.S. 139  1:30-2:50	C.S.D. 8 I.S. 52  1:15-2:50	SAME AS TUESDAY	SAME AS WEDNESDAY

**APPENDIX C: CALENDAR OF PERFORMANCES**

<b>SEPTEMBER</b>		<b>MARCH</b>	
Date	Site	Date	Site
9/25/91	Supreme Court, Centre Street	3/3/92	I.S. 115 Dominican Independence Day
<b>OCTOBER</b>		3/17/92	Hostos Community College
Date	Site	3/19/92	Hispanic Task Force, Municipal Building, Centre Street
10/15/91	Albany Legislative Building	3/27/92	Grand Hyatt Hotel, NYC Puerto Rican Bar Association
10/30/91	Pregones Theater, Bronx	<b>APRIL</b>	
<b>NOVEMBER</b>		Date	Site
Date	Site	4/10/92	P.S. 14 (Queens)
11/1/91	Grand Hyatt Hotel, NYC	4/13/92	I.S. 113
11/19/91	Albany, NY (Principals' Institute)	4/14/92	I.S. 139
11/20/91	Daily News Building (WPIX)	<b>MAY</b>	
11/22/92	I.S. 139	Date	Site
11/22/91	Roosevelt H.S.	5/1/92	Alfred E. Smith H.S.
<b>DECEMBER</b>		5/4/92	Bronx Court House
Date	Site	5/20/92*	Carnegie Hall
12/16	I.S. 113	5/29/92	PREA (Puerto Rican Educators' Association)
12/17	I.S. 113	5/30/92	I.S. 184, PAC Conference
12/17	Lincoln Center	<b>JUNE</b>	
12/19*	Albany New York State Regents Conference	Date	Site
<b>FEBRUARY</b>		6/3/92	Manhattan Community College
Date	Site	6/4/92	Manhattan Community College
2/14/92	P.S. 30 Brotherhood Month	6/6/92	Hall, Union Local 1199
2/27/92	I.S. 115 Dominican Independence Day	6/22/92	P.S. 291, Graduation
		6/23/92	P.S. 62, Graduation
		6/24/92	Bronx High School of Science

\* Entire chorus participated.

# Los Cumbancheros: A bilingual chorus

by Maria Berrios

"Los Cumbancheros" is a program which reinforces English as a second language through music and voice instruction. This program is made possible through funding from the New York State Education Department and assistance from the New York City Board of Education's Division of Multilingual and Multicultural Education.

This chorus was established as a small club at I.S. 139. When the program was expanded throughout the South Bronx in September of 1989, it was a big success. It is still going strong today.

There are four districts involved from the South Bronx, districts 7, 8, 10, and 11. It involves different junior high schools, elementary schools, and now the new addition which has been made this year

includes various high schools. Alfred E. Smith High School will soon be joining this group. The schools involved in the program are only schools from the South Bronx. This year there are over 200 students in the chorus, not including the high school groups.

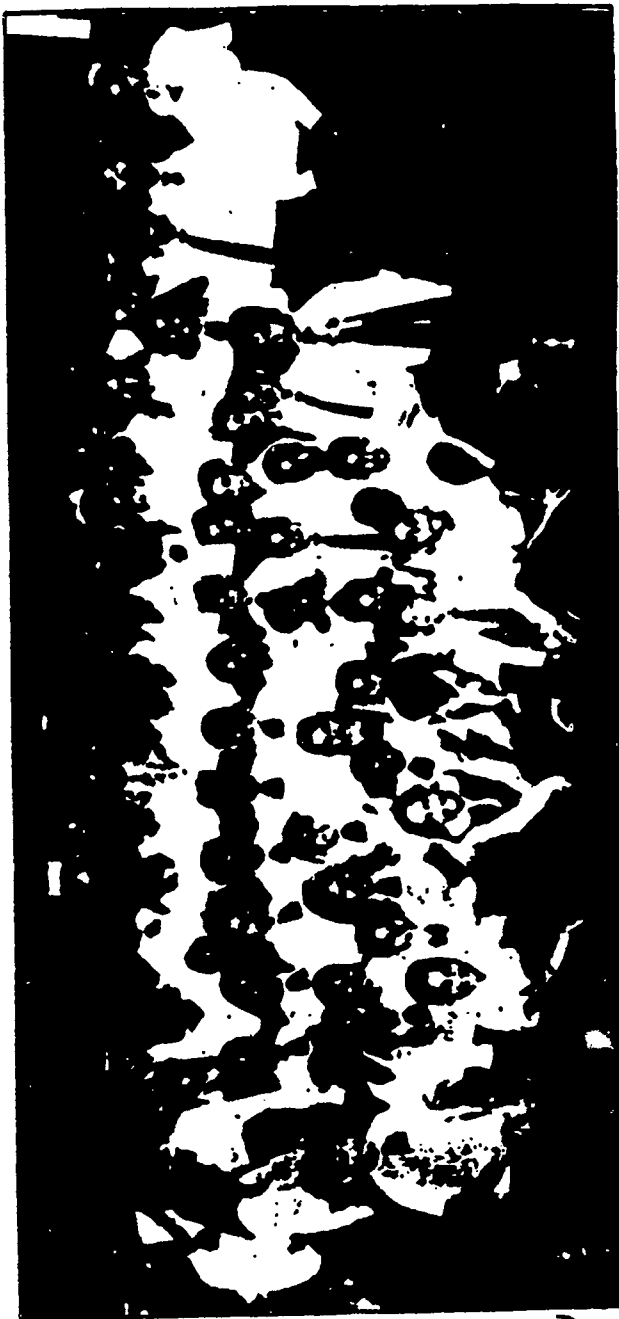
The staff is directed by Mrs. Raquel Beaz, the pianist is Mr. William Rodriguez, the bass player is Mr. Victor Vazquez, Mr.

David Mead is the drummer, and Mr. George Delgado plays the organ. The arranger of the songs and music is Mr. Pequeto Pastor, and last but not least the secretary is Maria Santiago.

Those people make everything possible for Los Cumbancheros. They go to each school to rehearse the music and lyrics with the students, and the high school groups meet after school from three o'clock until five o'clock to rehearse at I.S. 139 on Wednesdays.

In 1990, a new part was added to Los Cumbancheros, the percussion group directed by Mr. Mead. Some of the students didn't always want to sing, and the staff decided to add the percussion group for these students. The percussion group involves drums, congas, and other instruments played by hand. This special group is wonderful doing what they know best: playing instruments.

As for myself, I'm also involved in this special program. I've been in this chorus for four years in a row since I attended junior high school. This program is very special because it helps students with their English language. We also go to many different places like Albany to perform. We've also performed at Gracie Mansion, in various hotels, at the Puerto Rican Day Parade, and on television. My opinion of the staff is that I love all of them, especially Mrs. Beaz, because she is like a mother to all of the students in the chorus.



Los Cumbancheros will be performing at Spanish event



## APPENDIX E: LIST OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS AND SONGS

Staff for Los Cumbancheros used a variety of lyrics and material taken from theory books. The main instructional materials were:

Let's Learn Music, Book I & II. Adelaide A. Hascall, Hayes School Publishing Co.  
Rhythm, Time and Value, Elementary School Series. Spirit Duplicating Masters  
Music Signs. Mary Lou Walker, Music Series  
Music Notation. Spirit Duplicating Masters

### Songs Featured in the Carnegie Hall Performance:

Imagine (U.K.)	Lennon
Chiapaneca (Mexico)	Unknown
Isla Bonita (U.S.A.)	Madonna
Quisqueya (Santa Domingo)	Hernandez
I'll Always Love You (U.S.A.)	George
Sombras en Vasija de Barro (Ecuador)	Sansores/Brito
Mis Amores Piel Canela (Puerto Rico)	Madera/Capo
New York State of Mind (U.S.A.)	Joel